The Effect of Social Media on Providence College Students

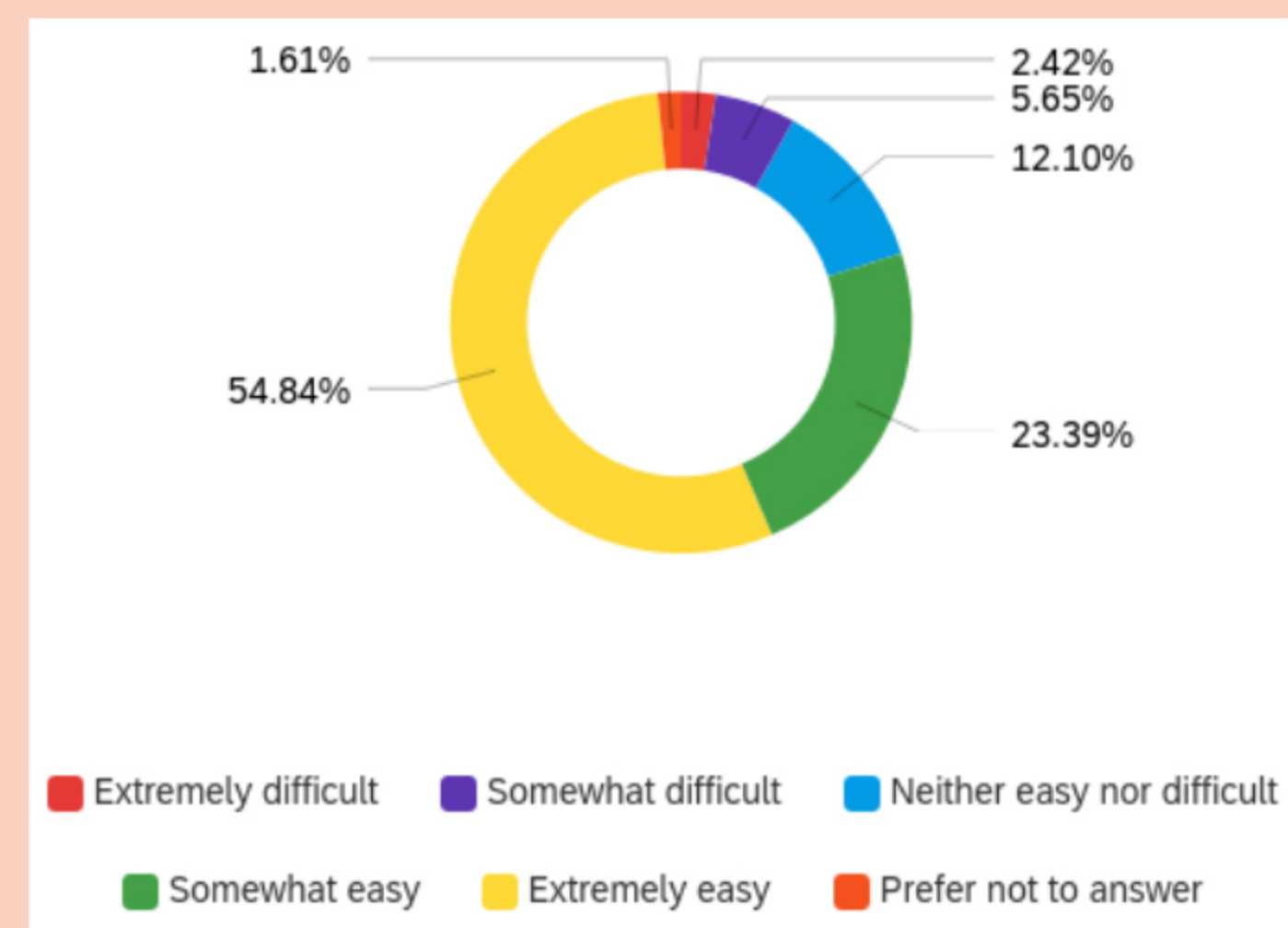**Authors**
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Introduction

Social media has played a major role in the lives of individuals for years. Our group was particularly interested in studying how social media usage has influenced Providence College students in terms of their mental health, physical health, and communication skills. Because about 147 out of 155 of our respondents use at least one social media platform, we wanted to better understand what their motivations are and what the results of their usage are.

Communication Skills

- 92.97% of survey takers use social media to communicate.
- 54.84% said it was "extremely easy to communicate" with others in person despite their usage of social media.
  - As a result, we can conclude that Providence College students' communication skills were not affected by social media.
- However, we found astonishing results regarding the difference between male and female responses.
  - 4.8% of females were negatively impacted while 4.3% of males were negatively impacted.
  - 25.5% of males feel confident communication in person while only 20.9% of females feel confident.

Physical Health

- We did not find that social. media was linked in sleep deprivation or low energy levels.
  - However, around 30% of respondents said they spend either 4-5 hours or 5+ hours a day on social media, and 68.2% of those respondents reported having symptoms besides sleep deprivation and low energy.

- Females reported experiencing poor posture due to social media usage more often than males
  - (68.7% vs. 41.2%)
- Females reported experiencing headaches due to social media more often than males
  - (35.8% vs. 15.7%)
- 16.4% of females use social media for over 5 hours a day compared to only 5.9% of males. Therefore, it makes sense that females experience more negative symptoms

- 42.86% of respondents who indicated they were sleep deprived got 6 or less hours of sleep, and 67.2% of respondents said using social media is the last thing they do before bed
- 66% of individuals who got less than 6 hours of sleep and were sleep deprived went on social media before bed


Mental Health

Self-Esteem

- We found social media to have a large negative effect on self-esteem.
  - 89.6% of survey takers said social media had at least some effect on how they viewed their own life.
  - Based on data from various survey questions, social media has a greater impact on females' self-esteem than males.
- 55.08% of survey takers responded feeling at least "somewhat displeased" when they do not receive a specific amount of likes or comments on social media.
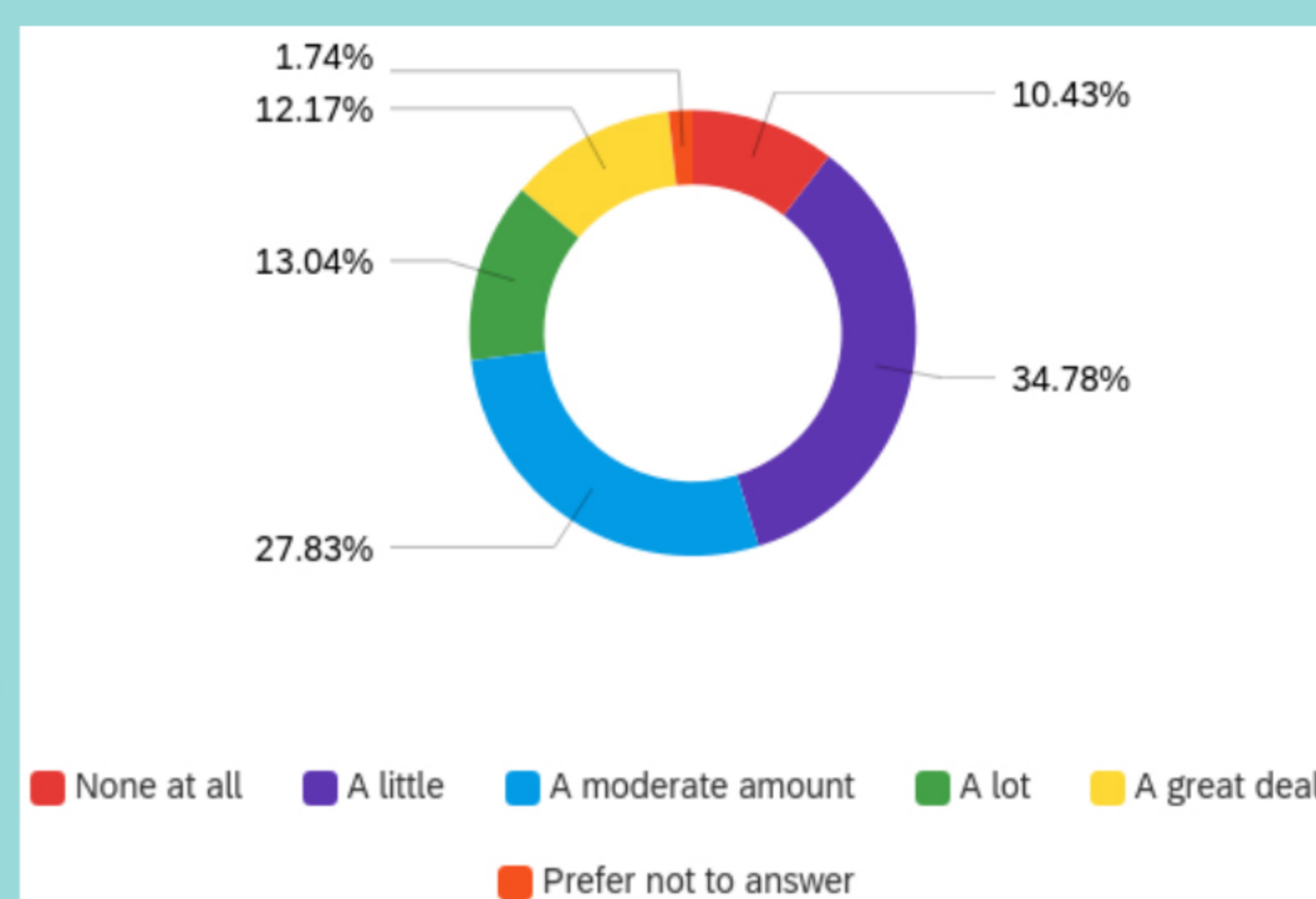

Bullying & Harassment

- 78.9% of survey takers recorded witnessing someone get harassed or bullied over social media.
- 85.04% of survey takers recorded cyber-bullying as being a disadvantage of social media; this was the second-highest recorded response regarding the disadvantages.
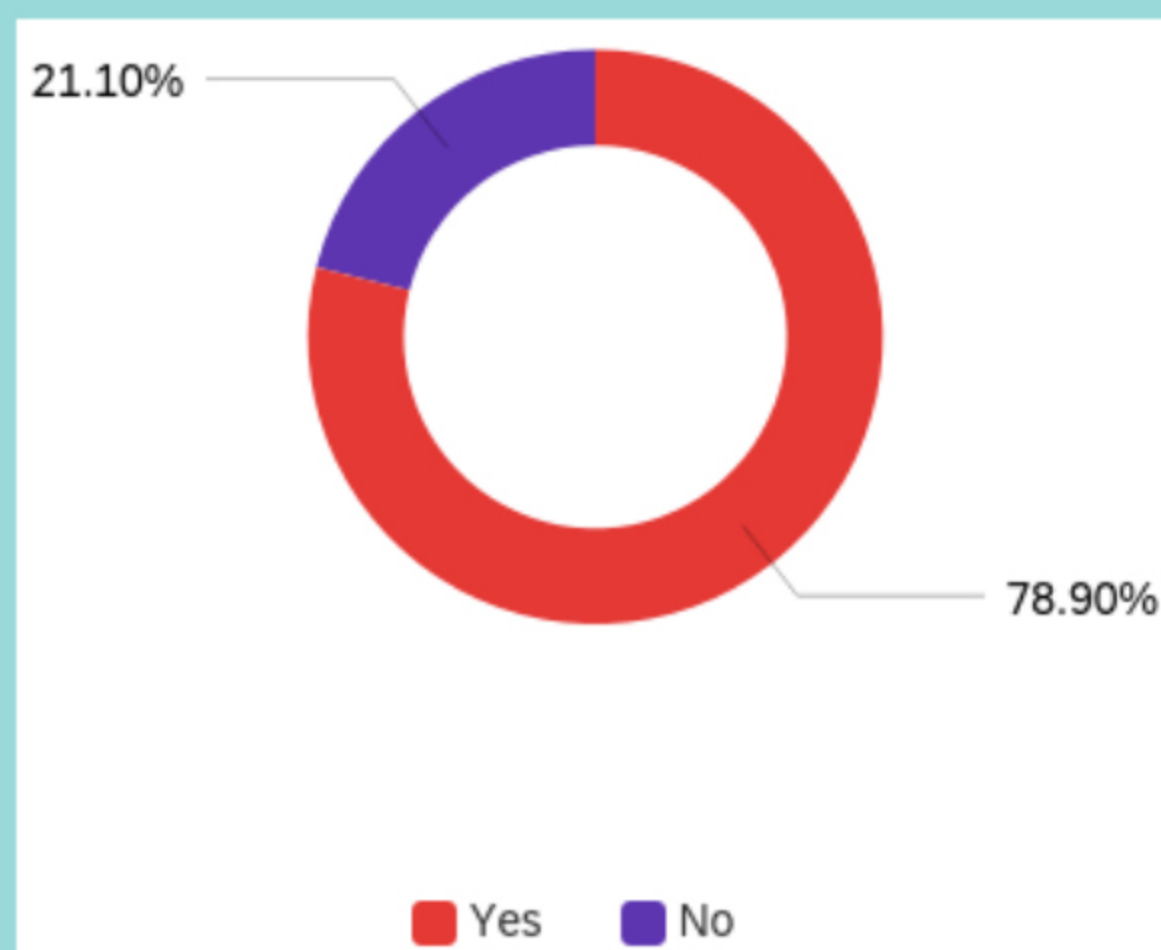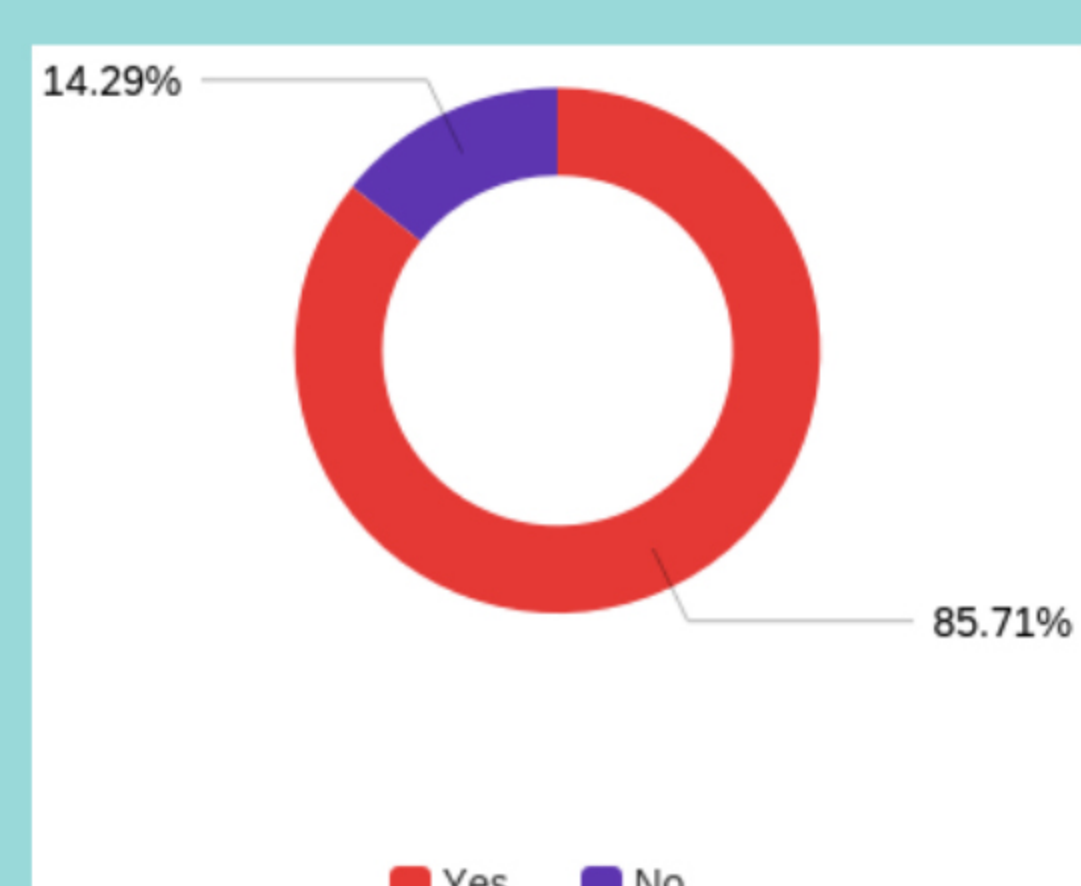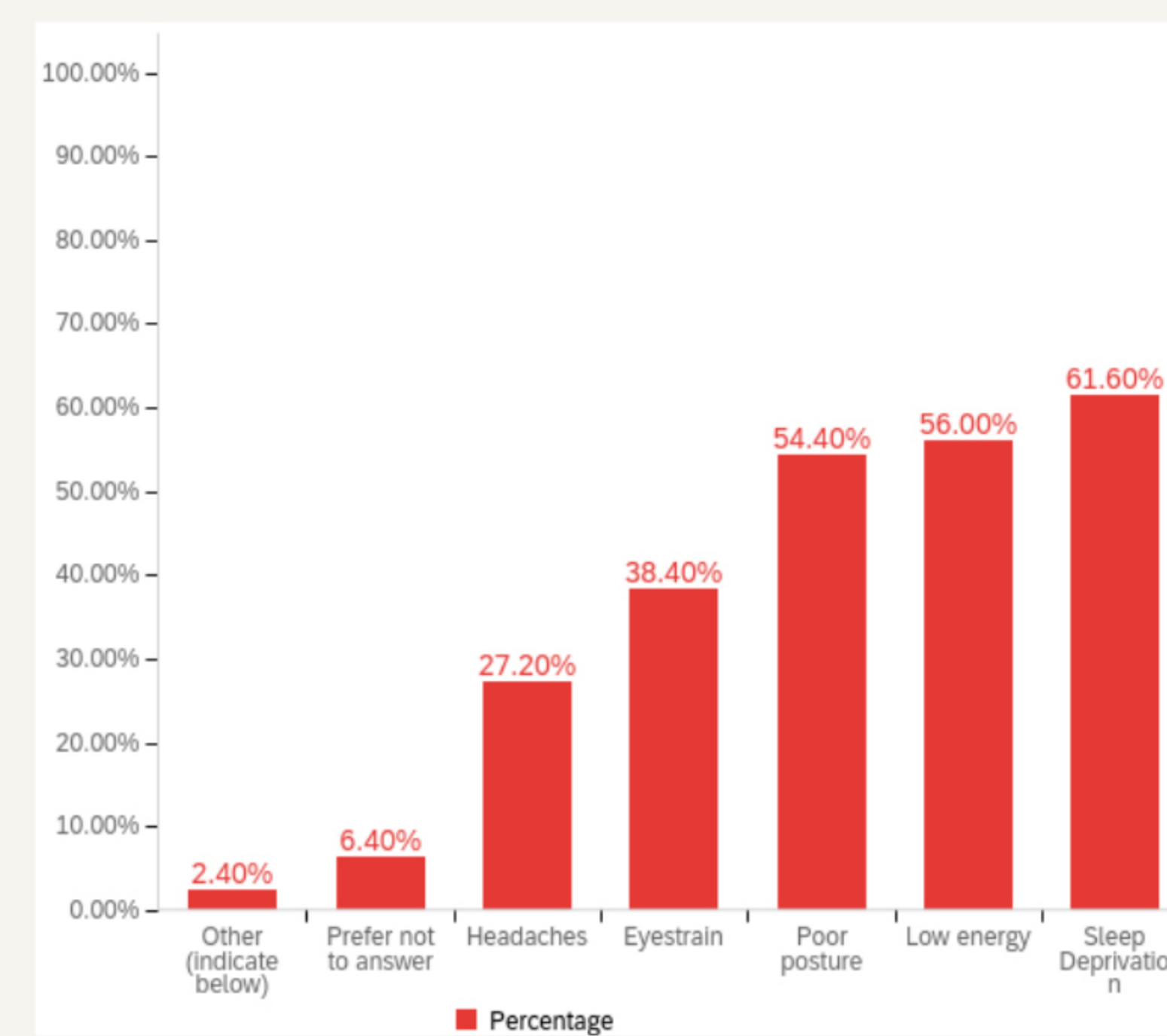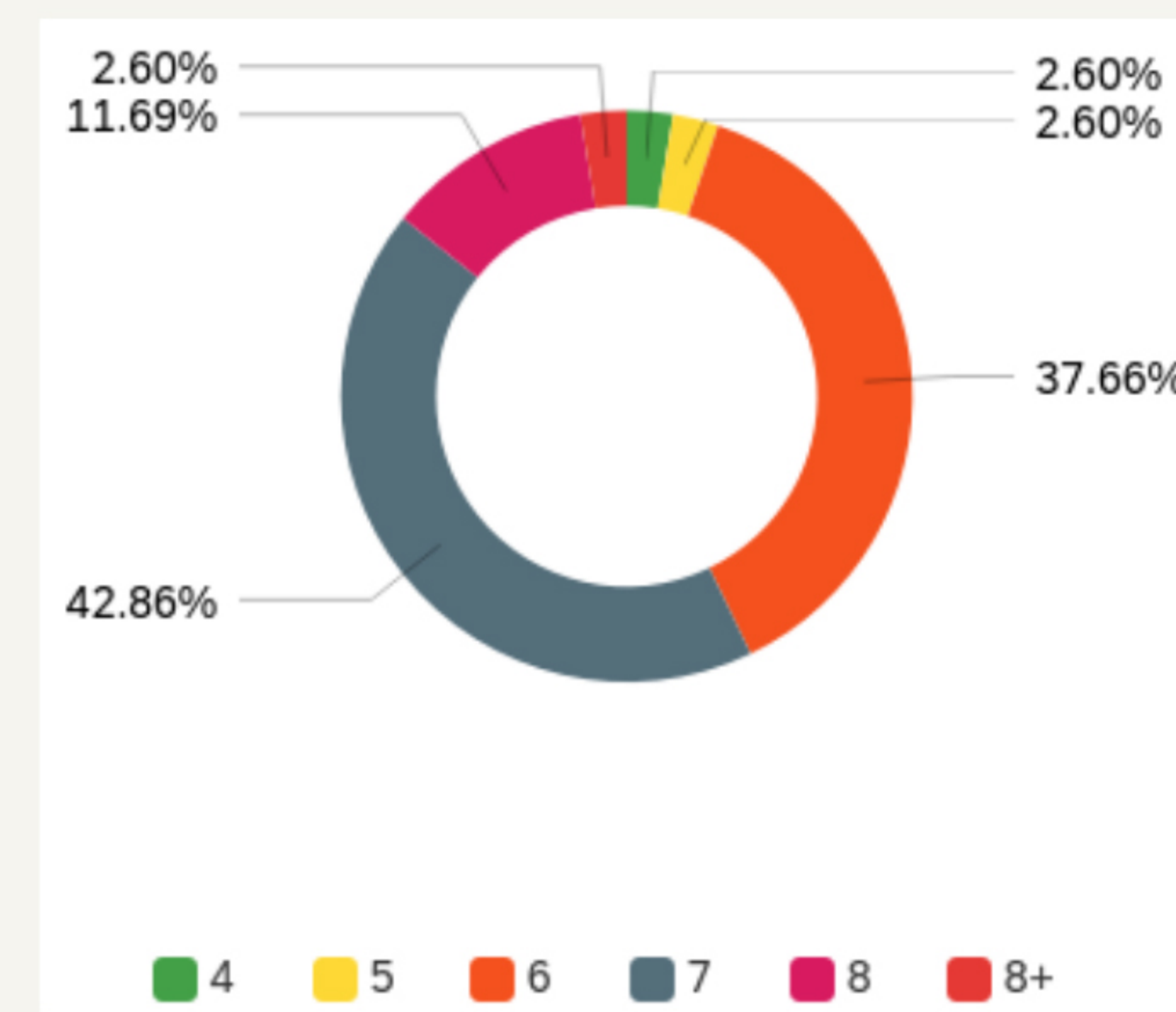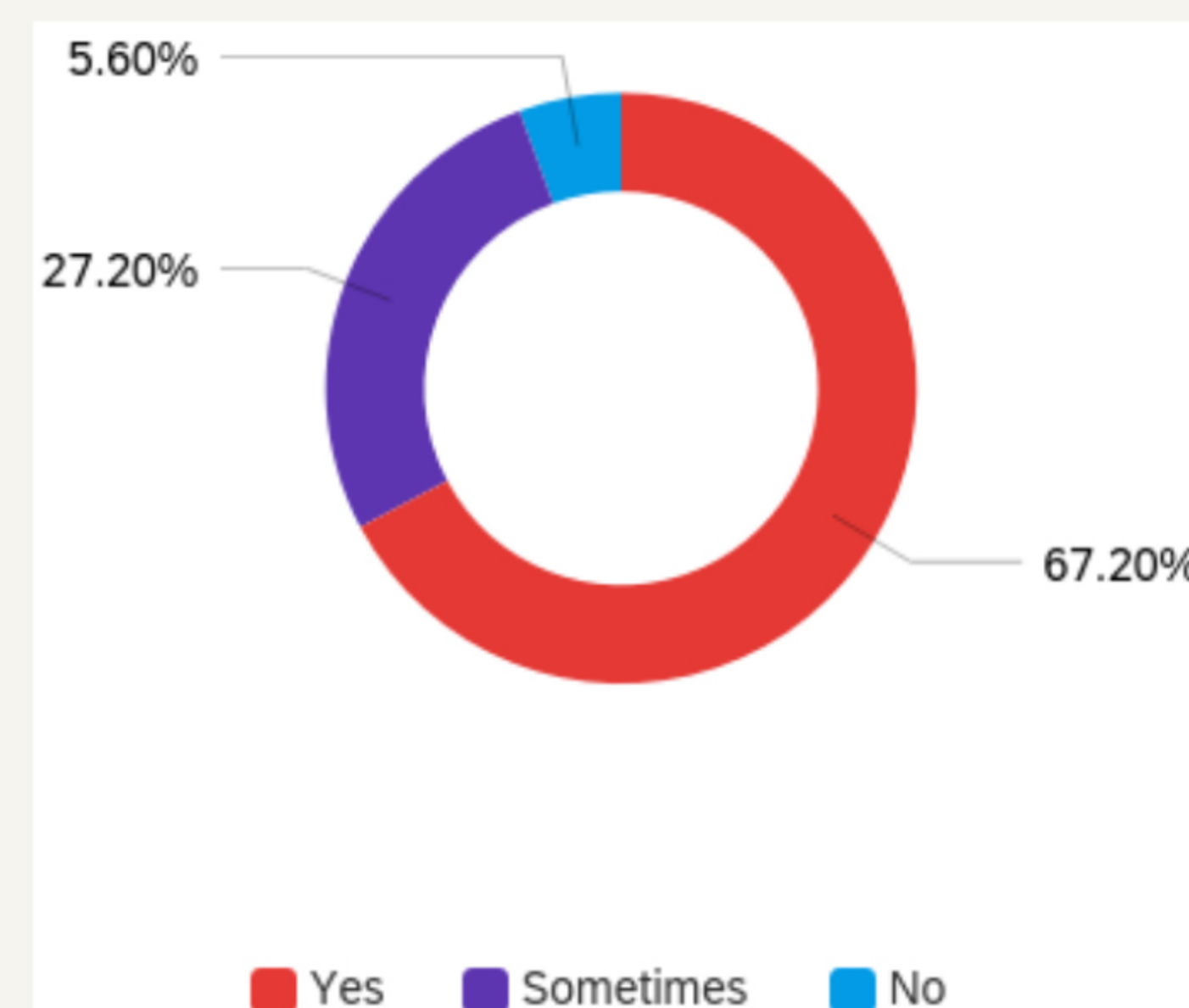

Depression & Loneliness

- Surprisingly, most people said they did not feel depressed or lonesome due to social media platforms.
  - However, 40% of females responded "yes" while only 13.6% of males responded "yes"
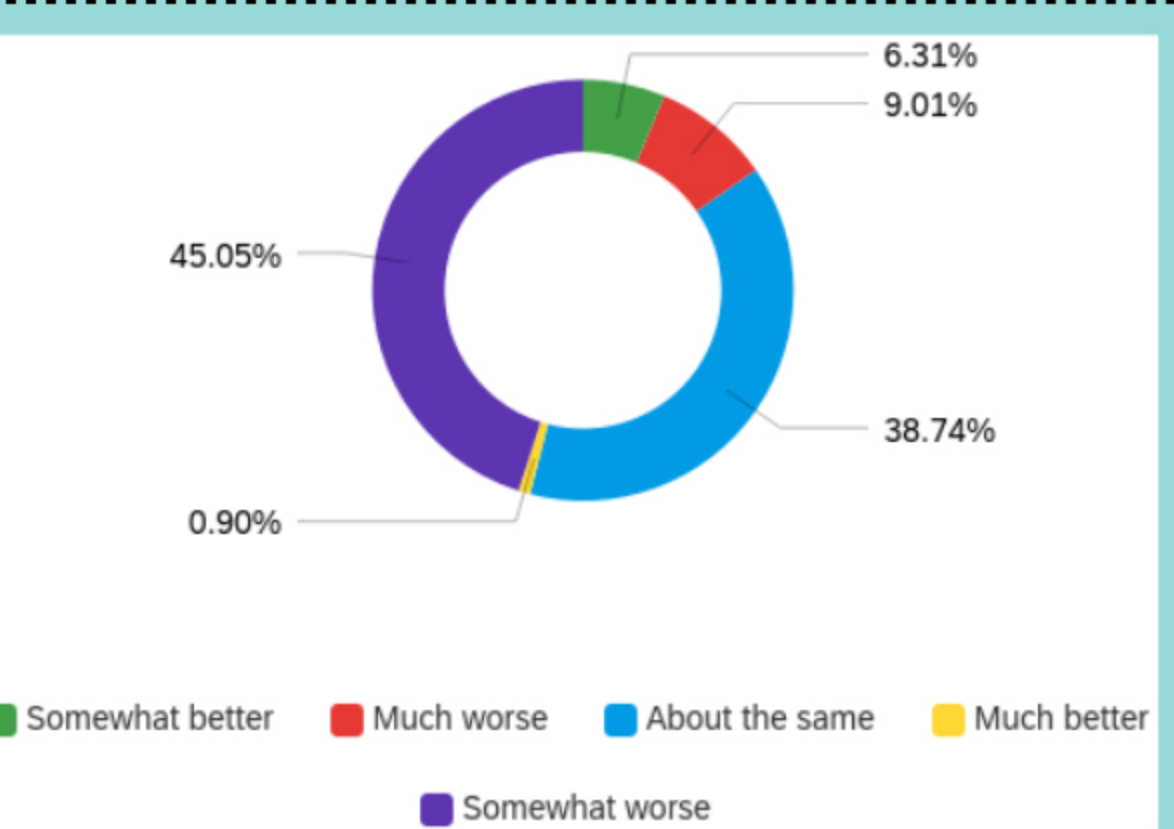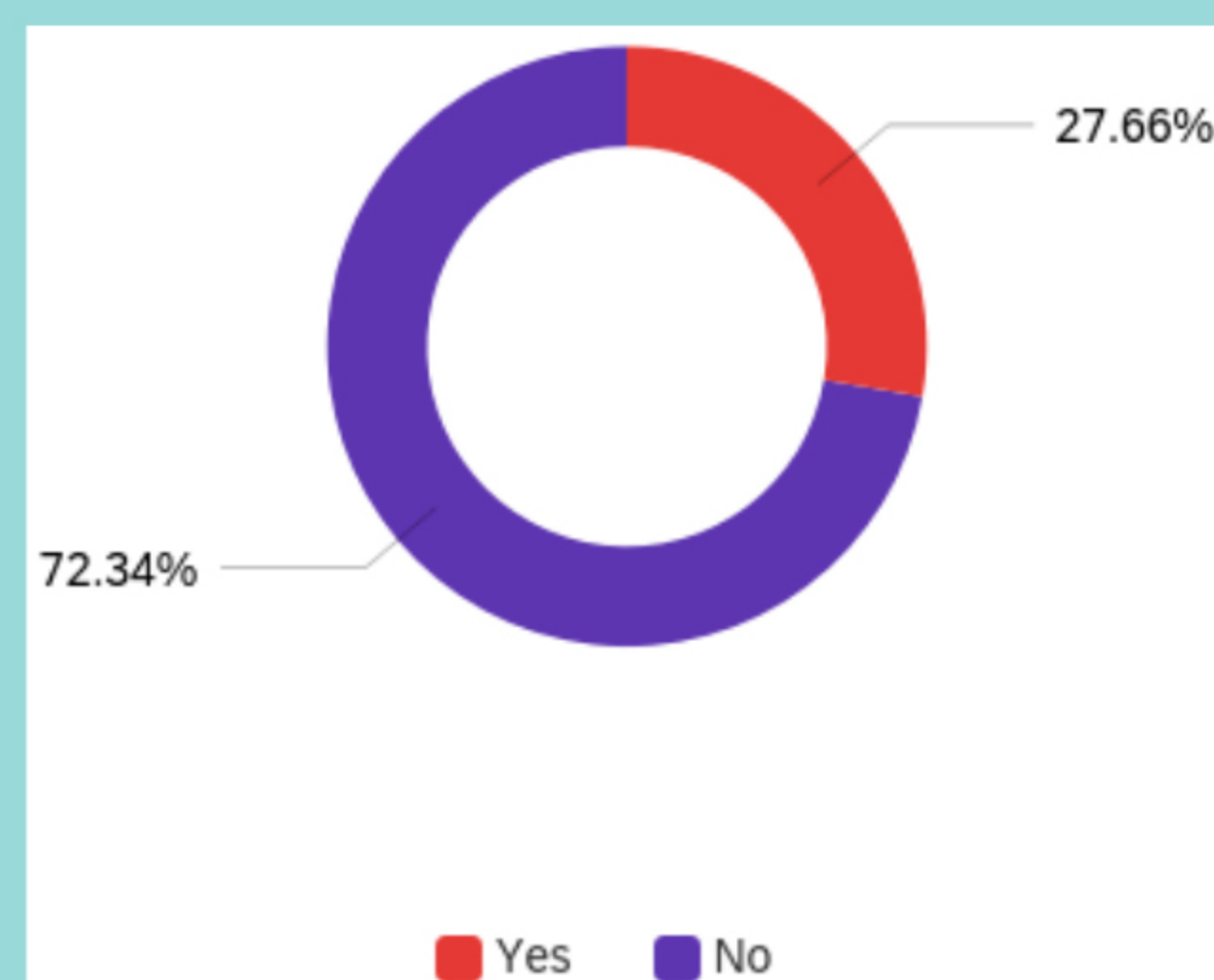
- 54% of survey takers reported social media having at least some negative effect on their mental health.
- Only 7.21% of people recorded their mental health improving due to social media.
- 70.5% of the female participants responded that social media caused their mental health to become at least "somewhat worse" while only 32.6% of males agreed.

- 85.71% of survey takers recorded witnessing an individual suffer mentally due to mental health
  - There was no gender discrepancy here
    - About 85% of females and 85% of men responded that they had witnessed this effect.

Recommendations

What does decreasing usage look like and how can it be achieved?
- Find new hobbies, focus on school work, hang out more with friends/family in person as opposed to over text/phone.
- Use focus mode- pick who you get calls/texts from so you don't receive a ton of notifications.

Take away "likes" altogether.
- Individuals will not focus on how many "likes" they receive.
- We will likely see an increase in their self-esteem, which is one of the main issues we saw with social media usage.
- Bullying/harassment could also decrease, as people won't be seen as "popular" or "lame" if they get a certain amount of likes.

Follow more body positive and self-betterment accounts.
- Will boost an individuals' self-confidence.
- Avoid accounts that may trigger insecurities.
- When downloading an app, it would be helpful to take a survey to filter one's interests so they only see content they want to see.